

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6956
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 527

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, SF, WA
SUBJ: NAMIBIA : DISCUSSION WITH DFA OFFICIAL

1. BRITISH MINISTER SUMMERHAYES AND EMBASSY POLITICAL
COUNSELOR OVER LUNCH MARCH 15 DISCUSSED STATUS OF SAG
CONSIDERATION OF WESTERN PROPOSALS WITH NEIL VAN HEERDEN,
ASSISTANT TO FOREIGN MIN BOTHA. VAN HEERDEN, A
CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER, IS CLOSE TO BOTH BRAND
FOURIE AND BOTHA AND HAS BEEN HEAVILY INVOLVED IN STAFF
WORK FOR THE MINISTER IN THE NAMIBIAN NEGOTIATIONS.

2. VAN HEERDEN EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WERE INTENSE
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POLITICAL PRESSURES ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON THE
NAMIBIAN ISSUES. HE SAID THAT PRESSURES FROM THE
VAN ZIJL GROUP IN WINDHOEK (HE NEVER REFERRED TO DU
PLESSIS BUT ALWAYS TO VAN ZIJL) HAD "INCREASED
ENORMOUSLY" OVER THE PAST WEEK. HE ACKNOWLEDGED WE
WOULD ASSUME THAT STRESS ON THIS FACTOR WAS A
NEGOTIATING TACTIC AND HE AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE A GOOD TACTIC

TO USE IN ANY EVENT. BUT THIS PRESSURE WAS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE SITUATION, HE SAID, AND WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE IT. THE VAN ZIJL GROUP, HE ASSERTED, RECOGNIZED THAT "WE WERE COMING INTO THE HOME STRETCH" AND IT WAS GOING ALL OUT. HE IMPLIED THAT THEY HAD FOUND SOME RECEPTIVE EARS IN THE CABINET. HE SAID THE ARGUMENT "IT COULD HAPPEN HERE," (I.E., IN SOUTH AFRICA) WAS A VERY EFFECTIVE ONE. HE IMPLIED THAT THE VAN ZIJL TACTIC WAS TO PUSH HARD FOR AN EARLY DECISION TO PROCEED WITH NEW ELECTIONS AMONG THE WHITE POPULATION FOR THE SOUTH WEST AFRICA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

3. VAN HEERDEN SAID HE HIMSELF WAS UNCERTAIN PRECISELY WHAT THE SWA NATS INTENDED TO DO IF THEY SHOULD HAVE AN ELECTION AND BEAT MUDGE, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEY WISHED TO HEAD OFF APPROVAL OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL. WHEN ASKED IF HE THOUGH VAN ZIJL AND DU PLESSIS HOPED TO DUPLICATE IAN SMITH'S ACHIEVEMENT AND HAVING ACHIEVED A WHITE MANDATE NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT WITH A GROUP OF BLACKS, HE NODDED, BUT AGREED WITH SUMMERHAYES THAT THERE DID NOT SEEM TO BE ANY BLACK LEADERS WHO WOULD WISH TO DEAL WITH THE NATS. VAN HEERDEN DESCRIBED KERINA, THE SWA NATIONAL PARTY'S BLACK ALLY, AS THE "MOST UNSAVORY CHARACTER" ON THE SCENE.

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4. VAN HEERDEN SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT AT THIS POINT TO DO SOMETHING TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE ON THE SAG. HE RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF THE A-G ANNOUNCING A TARGET DATE FOR ELECTION WITH THE STIPULATION THAT THE FINAL DECISION WOULD BE MADE TOGETHER WITH THE UN AND SPECIAL REP. VAN HEERDEN SAID THIS WAS HIS OWN IDEA BUT HE REPEATEDLY RETURNED TO THE SUBJECT. HE SAID THAT SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT COULD TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF FROM THE VAN ZIJL GROUP (PRESUMABLY BY PROVIDING A JUSTIFICATION FOR NOT HOLDING A NEW ELECTION AMONG THE WHITES AT THIS TIME), AND WOULD ALSO PROVIDE MOMENTUM TO THE AGREEMENT AND THUS SERVE THE INTERESTS OF BOTH THE WEST AND SOUTH AFRICA. HE SAID THERE WERE MANY PEOPLE IN THE GOVT HERE AS WELL AS AMONG THE WHITES IN SOUTH WEST WHO SIMPLY BELIEVED THERE WAS NO SERIOUS PROSPECT OF AN ELECTION WITH UN PRESENCE AND SWAPO PARTICIPATION. HE EMPHASIZED AGAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING A VALVE TO LET OFF SOME OF THE PRESSURE FROM VAN ZIJL AND GIVE THE MINISTER MORE TIME.

5. VAN HEERDEN SAID THE DECISION WAS STILL HANGING FIRE. HE NOTED THAT AFTER THE MARCH 8 MEETING, BRAND

FOURIE HAD TOLD VAN HEERDEN AND HIS COLLEAGUES THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT SOUTH AFRICAN GET ITS CARDS ON THE TABLE BEFORE THE FINAL PROPOSAL WAS MADE IN ORDER NOT TO BE STUCK WITH SOME CONCESSIONS IN ITS POCKETS WITH WHICH IT COULD HAVE TRADED.

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6. DURING THE DISCUSSION, VAN HEERDEN REPEATEDLY INDICATED HIS OWN SUPPORT FOR THE WESTERN PROPOSAL. HE REFERRED TO THE LOST OPORTUNITIES IN RHODESIA AND SAID THAT IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUED AND ESCALATED IN NAMIBIA, SOUTH AFRICAN CASUALITIES COULD EVENTUALLY BECOME A DIFFICULT POLITICAL ISSUE FOR THE GOVT. THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY, HE SAID, ADOPTED A CAN-DO ATTITUDE AND TENDED TO BE CONSERVATIVE. NEVERTHELESS, P.W. BOTHA AND GENERAL MALAN HAD COOPERATED WITH BOTHA IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS TO DATE. VAN HEERDEN THOUGHT THE CONCEPT OF CIVILIANIZING SAG LOGISTIC PERSONNEL WAS A PROMISING ONE. THE DEFENSE PEOPLE, HE SAID, HAD NOT YET "COME AROUND" ON THIS PROPOSAL

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BUT THE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO GET THEM ON BOARD. MORE DIFFICULT, HE SAID, WAS THE PROBLEM OF STATIONING PLATOON UNITS IN THE 9 BASES ON THE BORDER. HE SAID THERE WAS A RELUCTANCE TO LEAVE THE WHITE POPULATIONS OF THE TOWNS NEAR SEVERAL OF THESE BASES WITHOUT PROTECTION. HE ADMITTED THAT A PLATOON IN EACH OF THESE BASES WOULD ONLY BE SYMBOLIC, BUT HE SAID THIS ITSELF COULD BE IMPORTANT. IT WAS POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT CIVILIANS AND POLICE COULD BE POSTED AT THESE BASES AND PROVIDE THE SAME SORT OF SYMBOLIC PROTECTION AND OTHER FUNCTIONS OF AN ARMY PLATOON. HE SEEMED TAKEN WITH THE IDEA OF POLICE UNITS REPLACING THE PLATOON AND SUGGESTED IT SHOULD BE EXPLORED.

7. VAN HEERDEN AGREED THAT THE A-G MUST HAVE FOUND GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSAL AMONG INTERNAL LEADERS AND HE WAS EMPHATIC IN ASSERTING THAT DIRK MUDGE SUPPORTED ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLAN. HE EXPLAINED MUDGE'S NEGATIVE PUBLIC STATEMENTS AS NECESSITATED BY THE POLITICS OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY; HE AGREED THAT MANY OF THE BLACK DTA LEADERS WERE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT AN ELECTION AGAINST SWAPO.

8. VAN HEERDEN SAID THAT WHILE ONLY THE NP AND KERINA'S SATELLITE ORGANIZATION STRONGLY OPPOSED THE WESTERN PLAN, THE NP BECAUSE OF ITS POLITICAL LINKS IN SOUTH AFRICA EXERTED AN INFLUENCE OF 2 TO 1 OVER THE OTHER PARTIES CONCERNED. HE SPOKE OF THE "MUDGE-BOTHA" TEAM AND WARNED THAT IF THEY WERE POLITICALLY UNDERMINED, THERE WOULD BE NO HOPE FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL.

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9. MUDGE, ACCORDING TO VAN HEERDEN, IS PREPARING THE MOST INTENSIVE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN AFRICAN HISTORY AND BELIEVES HE CAN WIN 55 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN A CONTEST AGAINST SWAPO, PARTICULARLY IF SHIPENGA RETURNS AND SWAPO SPLITS. BUT, VAN HEERDEN SAID, MUDGE IS ANXIOUS FOR AN ELECTION DATE TO BE SET SO THAT HE CAN PLAN HIS CAMPAIGN AND NOT PEAK PREMATURELY. HE QUOTED MUDGE AS SAYING THAT IF THERE WERE TO BE A SEVEN MONTHS' DEADLY UNTIL THE ELECTIONS, HE WOULD

NEED R10 MILLION MORE IN CAMPAIGN FUNDS. VON HEERDEN SAID THE DTA WAS ALREADY SPENDING A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY; FOR EXAMPLE, THE PARTY HAD PURCHASED R12,000 ANTI-MINE VEHICLES FOR USE IN OVAMBO.

10. COMMENT: THE MEETING WITH VAN HEERDEN WAS ARRANGED ON SUMMERHAYES' INITIATIVE AND WE ASSUME BOTHA MAY HAVE ADVISED VAN HEERDEN ON THE LINE HE SHOULD TAKE. HIS REMARKS TEND TO SUPPORT THE CONSLUSION THAT A FINAL SAG DECISION HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE BY THE SAG, AND THAT LEADERSHIP POLITICS HAS BECOME A MAJOR FACTOR. THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION VAN HEERDEN SOUGHT TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT PIK BOTHA FAVORS ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL. THAT MAY BE THE CASE, BUT I HAVE NO CONFIRMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES. IN ANY EVENT, BOTHA IS PROCEEDING CAUTIOUSLY WITH ATTENTION FOCUSING AT THE MOMENT ON THE WHITE NAMIBIAN LEADERSHIP. BOTHA HAD STRESSED THIS PROBLEM IN OUR TALKS ON MARCH 5 (CAPE TOWN 0423). ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE WHITE LEADERS FROM SOUTH WEST -- MUDGE, VAN ZIJL, DU PLESSIS AND DE WET -- WERE ALL IN TOWN YESTERDAY AND SAW THE PRIME MINISTER, PRESUMABLY TO THRASH THINGS OUT (CAPE TOWN 526).

11. IT IS PROBLEMATICAL WHETHER ACQUIESCENCE IN THE A-G'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF A TARGET ELECTION DATE, AS VAN HEERDEN SUGGESTS, WOULD HAVE ANY IMPACT ON THE EFFORTS OF THE WHITE RIGHT-WINGERS IN NAMIBIA. IF THE
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IDEA IS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO HIM, BOTHA HIMSELF OR FOURIE WILL LIKELY RAISE IT WITH US AGAIN, THOUGH IT IS CONCEIVABLE THE SAG WOULD GO AHEAD WITHOUT CONSULTING US. IF THEY SHOULD CHOOSE THIS ROUTE, IT WOULD STILL LEAVE OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL, BUT THEIR UNILATERAL ACTION WOULD COMPLICATE MATTERS WITH SWAPO AND THE UN.
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